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ABSTRACT

A discussion of ongoing efforts to identify and analyze city schools which were instructionally effective for poor and/or minority children is presented. The "Search For Effective Schools" project attempted to answer the question: Are there schools that are instructionally effective for poor children? Two thousand five hundred pupils in twenty schools in the model cities' neighborhood were randomly sampled. The mean math and reading scores of these schools were compared with citywide norms. Effective schools were defined as those schools whose pupils were above the city average grade equivalent in reading and mathematics and an ineffective school's pupils were defined as those who scored below the city average. Nine schools were judged effective in teaching reading and five were judged effective in teaching both reading and math. The results of the study indicated that pupil family background neither caused or precluded elementary school instructional effectiveness. A reanalysis of the 1966 Equal Educational Opportunity Survey (EEOS) indicated that large differences in performance between the effective and ineffective schools could not be attributed to differences in the social class and family background of pupils enrolled in those schools, The report recommended future studies of school and teacher effectiveness which would consider the stratification design as a means for investigating the separate relationship of programs and policies for pupils of differing family and social background. (JP)

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SEARCH FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS: THE IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS OF CITY SCHOOLS THAT ARE INSTRUCTIONALLY EFFECTIVE FOR POOR CHILDREN

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The "Search for Effective Schools" project began in 1974 and has variously included: Ron Edmonds, Harvard Graduate School of Education Center for Urban Studies, Project Director; Gary Ratner, Greater Boston Legal Services, Project Director of Legal Research; John Frederiksen, Bolt Beranek & Newman, Inc., Project Director of Research; Larry Lezotte, Michigan State University Department of Urban and Metropolitan Studies, Project Consultant and Researcher; Charles Cheng, University of California at Los Angeles Graduate School of Education, Project Research Associate. From its beginning, the project has been supported by the Carnegie Corporation, with Frederick Mosher serving as Project Program Officer.

Attaining educational equity in our society requires that children have access to instructionally effective schools. Our society has not yet attained educational equity and our failure takes two principal forms. Many schools segregate children by race and then deny black pupils equitable distribution of our educational resources. Most schools implicitly classify children on the basis of family background, and then express a preference for middle-class children and disdain for the poor. Thus, for those of us who seek equity, the most critical policy matters in public education are court-ordered desegregation and effective instruction for poor children. My unstinting opposition to segregation compels me to continue to support court-ordered desegregation. Despite that, I recognize the tactical limitations of court-ordered desegregation when equity is the objective.

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There is no need here to elaborate the divisive and sometimes debilitating impact of court-ordered busing on the social fabric of many important American cities. Boston and Louisville are but the most visible of a half-dozen major metropolitan settings recently torn by the intense emotions and severe dislocation that accompany court-ordered desegregation. Opinion polls, impressionistic educational literature, and academic analyses make clear that the growing loss of public confidence in the equity of court-ordered busing is partly a function of our schools' seeming inability to effectively educate desegregated children who are poor. Moreover, there is a body of recent social science literature which can be said to virtually repudiate urban school reform as an instrument of social equity. Thus those of us who seek dramatic improvement in the quality of schooling available to the poor do so in a climate of public frustration and educator dispirit. The experiences of the most recently desegregated cities are not likely to relieve public frustration or raise educator spirits.

These remarks are not meant to offer a scintilla of support to the racism that is principal cause of most city council, school committee, and board of education opposition to desegregation. These remarks are meant to acknowledge the appropriateness of seeking alternative approaches to desegregation that will be more successful in improving the quality of instruction available to desegregated pupils. Desegregation in particular and

urban school reform in general would be greatly advanced were we to articulate reliable means for improving the quality of teaching in schools that serve the urban poor.

Public perspective on these matters must flounder till at least one of two conditions come to pass. An altered political climate may precipitate a renewed quest for greater social justice, in which case we will not have to wait for social science initiative before renewing efforts to make effective schooling independent of pupil family income and social class. What is more likely is that social science research will produce findings that show that instructional effectiveness is a function of certain explicit institutional circumstances that are accessible to any group of educational decisionmakers determined to create and maintain such circumstances. In addition to their value in desegregation planning, such findings would be of inestimable public benefit for at least the following reason: The annual average per pupil expenditure is rising with no concomitant rise in public acceptance of reported levels of pupil performance. Most public policymakers and educational decisionmakers would therefore eagerly pursue evidence of practical means by which pupil performance might be improved, particularly for those least well-werved by existing educational arrangements.

It must be reluctantly noted that the American bicentennial may mark the nadir of national faith in our ability to justly

serve all our people. We are surrounded and daily besieged by irresistable evidence of the social pathology that characterizes much of the life of our major institutions. Schools are no exception. Our national need to know of "things that work" has never been greater.

It is at precisely this point in the public policy fray that this discussion seeks to enter. This discussion will describe ongoing efforts to identify and analyze city schools that are instructionally effective for poor and/or minority children. I am pleased to note that we have already developed unusually promising evidence of the thesis we seek to demonstrate in the research under discussion. My thesis is that all children, excepting only those of certificable handicap, are eminently educable, and the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education.

The "Search for Effective Schools" project began by answering the question: "Are there schools that are instructionally effective for poor children?" In September of 1974 Lezotte, Edmonds, and Ratner described their analysis of pupil performance in the twenty elementary schools that make up Detroit's Model Cities Neighborhood (See Lezotte, Edmonds, and Ratner's "Remedy for School Failure to Equitably Deliver Basic School Skills"). All of the schools are located in inner-city Detroit and serve a predominantly poor and minority pupil population. Reading and math scores were analyzed from Detroit's Spring 1973 use of the Stanford Achievement Test and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Of the 10,000 pupils in the twenty schools in the Model Cities' Neighborhood, 2,500 were randomly sampled. With minor variation, the sample

included eight pupils per classroom in each of the twenty schools. The mean math and reading scores for the twenty schools were compared with citywide norms. An effective school among the twenty was defined as being at or above the city average grade equivalent in math and reading. An ineffective school was defined as below the city average. Using these criteria, eight of the twenty schools were judged effective in teaching math. Nine were judged effective in teaching reading and five were judged effective in teaching both math and reading.

Having established that instructionally effective city schools can be located, we turned to the problem of establishing the relationship between pupil family background and building effectiveness. Two schools among the twenty, Duffield and Bunche, were found that were matched on the basis of eleven social indicators. Duffield pupils averaged nearly four months above the city average in reading and math. Bunche pupils averaged nearly three months below the city reading average and 1.5 months below the city math average.

The similarity in the characteristics of the two pupil populations permits us to infer the importance of school behavior in making pupil performance independent of family background. The overriding point here is that, in and of itself, pupil family background neither causes nor precludes elementary school instructional effectiveness.

Despite our success in identifying instructionally effective schools for the urban poor, we recognized the limitations of the Detroit Model Cities' Neighborhood analysis. Our evaluation of school success with

poor children had depended on evaluating schools with relatively homogeneous pupil populations. The numbers of schools were too few to justify firm conclusions. Finally, the achievement tests were normative, as was the basis for determining building effectiveness among the twenty schools. Nonetheless, the Model Cities' Neighborhood analysis had served our purposes well by identifying instructionally effective inner city schools and describing certain of one of those schools.

The second phase of the project was a reanalysis of the 1966 Equal Educational Opportunity Survey (EEOS) data (see John Frederisken's "School Effectiveness and Equality of Educational Opportunity"). Our purpose was to answer a number of research questions that required a data base both larger and richer than had been available to us in the Model Cities' Neighborhood analysis. We retained our interest in identifying instructionally effective schools for the poor, but in addition we wanted to study the effects of schools on children having different social backgrounds. Such an inquiry would permit us to evaluate school contributions to educational outcomes independent of our ability to match schools on the basis of the socioeconomic characteristics of their pupils.

Summarizing and oversimplifying results, we found at least 55 effective schools in the Northeast quadrant of the EEOS. Remember that an effective school must eliminate the relationship between successful performance and family background. The schools varied widely in racial composition, per pupil expenditure, and other presumed determinants of school quality.

held than the belief that the family is somehow principal determinant of whether or not a child will do well in school. The popularity of that belief continues partly because many social scientists and opinion makers continue to espouse the belief that family background is chief cause of the quality of pupil performance. Such a belief has the effect of absolving educators of their professional responsibility to be instructionally effective.

While recognizing the importance of family background in developing a child's character, personality, and intelligence, I cannot over-emphasize my rejection of the notion that a school is relieved of its instructional obligations when teaching the children of the poor. I reject such a notion partly because I recognize the existence of schools that successfully teach basic school skills to all children. Such success occurs partly because these schools are determined to serve all their pupils without regard to family background. At the same time, these schools recognize the necessity of modifying curricular design, text selection, teaching strategy, etc., in response to differences in family background among pupils in the school. Our findings strongly recommend that all schools be held responsible for effectively teaching basic school skills to all children. We recommend future studies of school and teacher effectiveness consider the stratification design as a means for investigating the separate relationship of programs and policies for pupils of differing family and social background. Information about individual student family background and social class is essential in our analysis if we are to disentangle the separate effects of pupil

In our re-analysis of the EEOS, separate evaluations of the schools were made for subgroups of pupils of different races and home backgrounds. Schools were found to be consistently effective (or ineffective) in teaching subgroups of their populations that were homogeneous in race and economic condition. School effectiveness for a given level on the home items scale extended across racial lines. The prime factors which condition a school's instructional effectiveness appear to be principally economic and social, rather than racial.

Without seeking to match effective and ineffective schools on mean social background variables, we found that the schools that were instructionally effective for poor and black children were indistinguishable from the instructionally less effective schools on measures of pupil social background (mean father's and mother's education, category of occupation, percentage of white students, mean family size, and percentage of intact families). The large differences in performance between the effective and ineffective schools could not therefore be attributed to differences in the social class and family background of pupils enrolled in the schools. This finding is in striking contrast to that of other analysts of the EEOS, who have generally concluded that variability in performance levels from school to school is only minimally related to institutional characteristics.

A very great proportion of the American people believe that family background and home environment are principal causes of the quality of pupil performance. In fact, no notion about schooling is more widely

background and school social class make-up on pupil achievement. Moreover, studies of school effectiveness should be multivariate in a variety of areas of school learning. The "Search for Effective Schools" project now underway at the Center for Urban Studies is designed in response to each of these design suggestions.

We are now gathering performance data and family background information on approximately 70,000 elementary pupils in Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Detroit. By fall we will have identified those schools that are most effective for poor children. We will then place observers in the effective schools to isolate and describe those replicable institutional behaviors most responsible for instructional effectiveness. My theoretical prediction is that the politics of accountability will be principal explanation for why some schools successfully teach math and reading to children of the poor while others do not.

Finally, there may be many among you who do not think it proper to evaluate schooling on so narrow a basis as pupil acquisition of reading and math skills. We share your interest in broader purposes as proper ends for schooling, but hasten to point out the following. American city schools, as a group, do not now successfully teach reading and math to sufficient proportions of the children of the poor. To bring city schools to widespread instructional success would be a social service triumph of the first order.

We are therefore quite content, at least for now, to concentrate our energies on the means by which schools that serve the poor might be brought to greater and greater instructional success.